



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

405613

November 8, 1968

Dear Mr. Zwick:

You will recall that on August 12, 1968, the President announced that the people of Bikini can be returned to their home atoll. This announcement followed a determination that the main islands of the atoll are safe for continuous human habitation and that the security requirements of the nation will permit the restoration of the atoll to the Bikinians. At the time of the announcement, the President requested the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget to cooperate and assist us in developing and putting into effect a redevelopment program.

As a first step in that effort, this Department and the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory organized a survey trip to Bikini, the survey party being composed of representatives of the Bikini people, staff members of the Trust Territory Government, and representatives of the Atomic Energy Commission, the Defense Department and the Department of the Interior. This visit, undertaken within two weeks of the President's announcement, was intended to lay the foundation for a re-settlement program for Bikini.

Following the completion of the visit to Bikini, we have turned to drafting a program looking toward the earliest possible return of the Bikinians. Representatives of the Atomic Energy Commission have prepared the estimates for the removal of testing debris, radioactive materials, and the clearing of vegetation preparatory to replanting the islands to productive crops. The Trust Territory Government and personnel of this Department have turned to the development of a re-settlement program designed to meet the President's criteria of a new and model community on Bikini.

I am pleased to forward to you for your consideration the combined results of the work to date, a program of redevelopment of Bikini for the next six years which represents our best current estimate of the cost of meeting the obligation of the United States to provide for a viable community and the speediest possible relocation of the people. The estimate calls for the expenditure of approximately \$3,000,000, most of which falls in the first two years of the program for the initial cleanup and construction phases of the project.

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BOX No 1227; "ERDA#2"  
BIKINI SURVEY (BIO-INFO)  
FOLDER 07 THRU 12/1968

We believe it is important that steps be taken to begin the program at an early date. We owe the people of Bikini nothing less; we owe the American people who have assumed responsibility for the Trust Territory nothing less. However, although the involved agencies of the Federal Government and the Trust Territory have been for some time working toward the ultimate return of the Bikini people, both the timing of the determination that return was possible, and the subsequent announcement by the President were such that it has not hitherto been possible to include funds for Bikini in any agency's 1969 or 1970 budget program.

I would add one further comment with respect to the estimated costs of re-settlement. As you will note in the enclosed paper, there has been an absolute loss of land in this land-poor area. Buildings can be rebuilt, crops can be replanted, but the land resource cannot be restored. During the August visit to Bikini, the representatives of the people became aware of the loss of this resource. Whether they will press for compensation for such loss we cannot at this time say. I merely wish to point out that the enclosed re-settlement program does not include any item for such compensation, if loss or damage claims are presented by the Bikinians, or if payments are otherwise found to be due them.

We believe the re-settlement program should continue to be moved forward with all possible dispatch and that its main features should be laid before the Congress soon after it convenes. We look forward to working with you to that end.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosures to the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Secretary of Defense. Representatives of both agencies are informally aware of our proposed program and the funding requirement which arises from it.

Sincerely yours,

*David S. Belch*  
*Acting* Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Charles J. Zwick  
Director  
Bureau of the Budget  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Enclosures